

# Magonia 43

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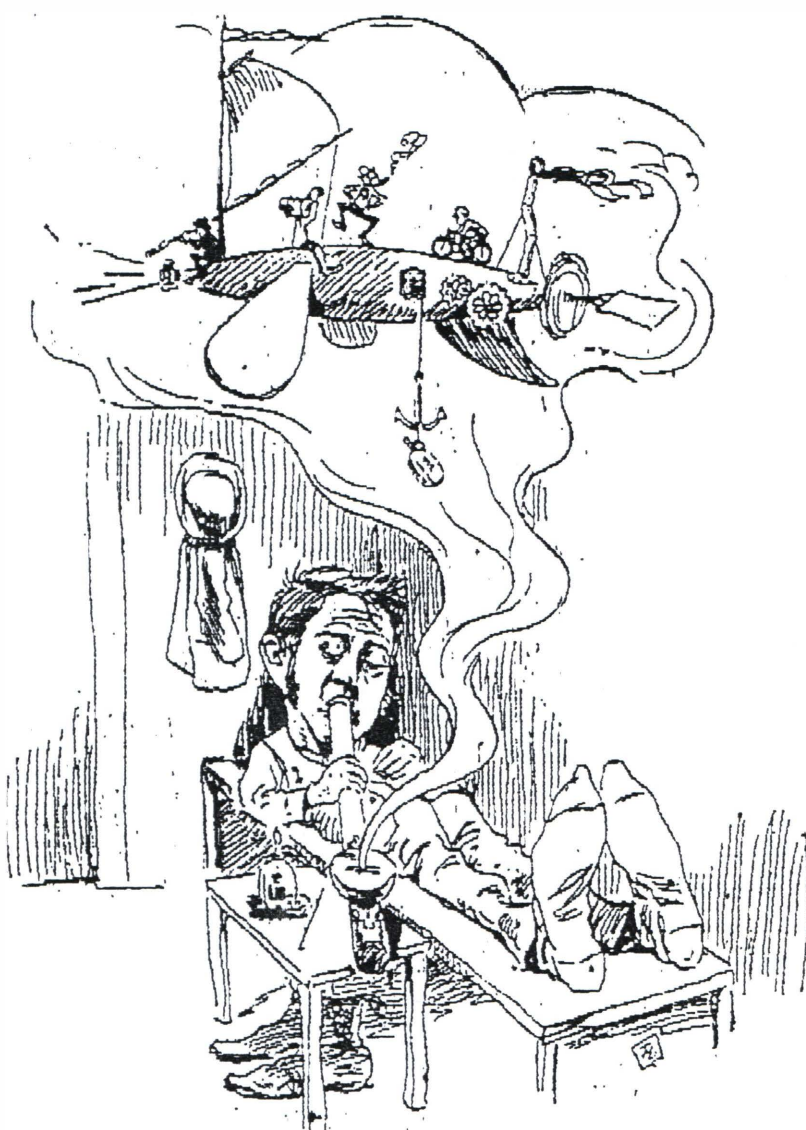
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# Magonia

MAGONIA 43 (MUFOB 91)

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**JOHN RIMMER**

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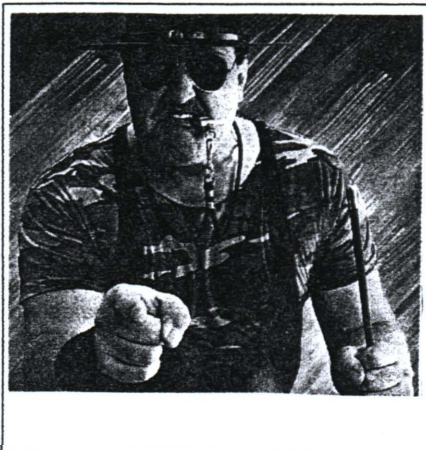
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# PETER ROGERSON'S NORTHERN ECHOES



In view of certain comments in certain unnamed journals, John Harney's editorial in the December 1966 issue of *MUFOB Bulletin* seems particularly apposite:

"[T]here is the problem of investigators who become emotionally involved with the witnesses whose

stories they investigate, with the result that they come to believe their stories without demanding objective proof. All UFO erudites will realise that the psychological phenomenon, which applies particularly to contact stories, is a serious obstacle to objective research. The problem is what to do about it. The answer of course is for serious UFO groups to ensure that contact cases are investigated by reliable people...

John went on to suggest that outsiders with a background in interrogating people could be used; he suggests retired CID officers "who don't believe in flying saucers".

This sounds very naive these days, but the problem remains with abduction cases as well as contact cases. Any updated suggestions? [Social Security fraud investigators? - Ed]. It is because of this natural effect that the much derided 'armchair ufologist' can produce a valuable perspective. However, in order to allow others to form reasoned opinions, investigators should produce much fuller reports, including full transcriptions of the interview (however tedious) rather than 'edited highlights'.

As this journal and its predecessors have insisted for a quarter of a century, many of these 'high strangeness' cases can only be understood by examining the life histories of the percipients, and

the surrounding cultural influences. We are going to need to learn much more about percipients than we do at present. Some may find this to be over-intrusive, and have expressed the view that only medical personnel can perform this task. However, given that their priority will be

therapy rather than investigation I am not sure they are going to be of much help. But even for therapy it strikes me that a course of treatment for a patient would depend on whether or not their personal reality reflects consensus reality, but many therapist still seem curiously averse to any kind of investigation of their patients' claims.

Ideally, if we *are* going to intrude into the private lives of percipients and investigators, then we should use pseudonyms. This is not a problem with new cases, but in the real world I wonder if there is much point when the witnesses we are discussing are household names. Would any pseudonym for the Hill's be less than transparent? Equally there is little we can do for those who, despite all advice, decide to go public themselves. In such cases there can be little comeback if the publicity turns sour or invites unwelcome expressions of concern or even criticism.

Part of the resistance still put up to psycho-social interpretations of UFO experiences is the religious feeling surrounding them. Any attempt to understand the experiences is seen as robbing them of a transcendental quality. Given that most ufologists have actually been attracted to the subject because of their disenchantment with conventional science (or at least its public image) this is to be expected.



**I**t is hard to believe but spaceships and odd flying machines are constantly crashing onto the surface of our planet. This unusual form of pollution is not a new phenomenon and it does not seem all that rare either. At best the operators of these aerial contraptions seem to be reckless and incompetent navigators of the air, but before we protest to the government for new legislation to crack down on these menaces we had better look at the evidence.

One of the first incidents occurred in Peru, sometime in 1878. A person who described himself as "A SERARO, Chemist," told the **South Pacific Times** of Callao, Peru, that he found a huge aerolite. After digging through several layers of mineral substance he arrived at an inner chamber. Inside this he found the dead body of a 4½-foot tall alien and beside it was a silver plate that was inscribed with hieroglyphics. This writing indicated that the vehicle and its pilot had come from Mars. The **New York Times** repeated this story for the benefit of its readership but it regarded the story as a poor lie, because:

Undoubtedly, the Peruvians mean well, and tell the best lies that they can invent. Indeed, it can be readily be perceived that the heart of the inventor of the aerolite story was in the right place, and that his faults were those of the head. The truth is that the Peruvians have never been systematically taught how to lie. Very probably, if they had our educational advantages, they would lie with intelligence and affect, and it is hardly fair for us...to despise the Peruvians for what is their misfortune, rather than their fault. (1,2,3,4.)

A similar story, in **La Capital**, describes the discovery of an egg-shaped rock near the Carcarana River, Santa Fe,

*"There is a great danger in venturing out these nights. What if one of those fellows from Mars should tumble out and fall on you?"*

Mystery man quoted in  
the **Austin Daily Statesman** 20th April  
1897

on 13 October 1877. (5) Two geologists, Paxton and Davis, drilled into this curiosity and found:

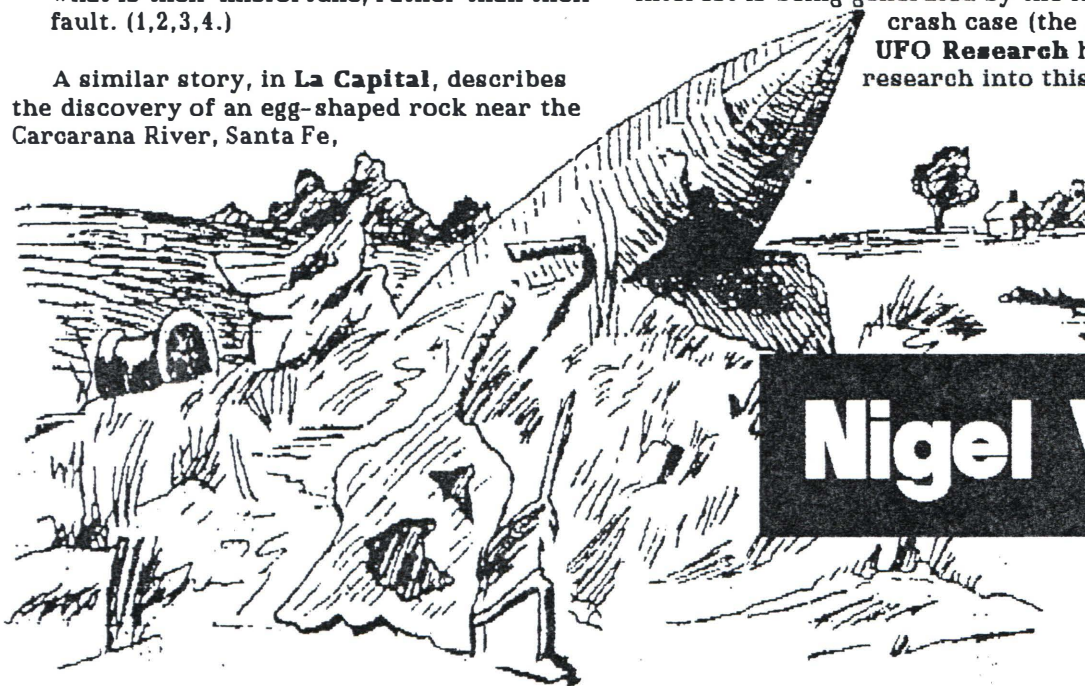
some cavities inside the hard rock. In one of them the men saw several objects such as a white, metallic hole-ridden amphora-like jar with many hieroglyphics engraved on its surface. Under the floor of this cavity they discovered another one which contained a 39 inch / 1.2 metre tall mummified body covered with a calciferous mass. (6,7.)

According to Fabio Picasso a couple of trips to the site were made by ufologists in the late 1970s. They found some blocked off tunnels that might be hiding the object, though what happened to the alleged remains is unknown. Picasso traces this story back to the 17 June 1864 edition of **La Pay** which tells of a Paxton and Davis who made an identical discovery near Pic James, Arrapahaya province, U.S.A. (8)

The idea of a crashed spaceship, with chambers containing the remains of a small 'Martian' pilot and artefacts inscribed with hieroglyphics, obviously is a hoax or tall story. Newspapers simply used it as a filler-item and did not take it seriously.

The form of this story can be seen as the template for the famous Aurora crash case. As noted in more detail below it features a dead pilot and the obligatory hieroglyphics. Furthermore, we can see these historical cases as being templates for contemporary crash/retrieval cases. (9,10.) Since so much interest is being generated by the Roswell

crash case (the **Fund for UFO Research** has funded research into this case to the



**Nigel Watson**

Down to Earth



1 *New York Times*  
17 August 1878.

2 *New York Times*  
14 August 1878.

3 Mr. X, *Res*  
*Bureaux Bulletin*,  
No. 17, 12 May 1977,  
pp 2-3.

4 A detailed  
account of this  
story is contained  
in: Zerpa, Fabio and  
Plataneo, Monica L.,  
"The Crash of a  
UFO in the 19th  
Century"  
unpublished circa  
1979. They tried to  
find the location  
of the aerolite and  
the body of the  
alien, but their  
report concludes  
by saying, 'this  
whole thing has  
the "ring" of an  
old Spanish "tale"  
from beginning to  
end. Much  
repetition, drawn  
out suspense, and  
no concrete  
evidence.'

5 *La Capital*  
(Rosario) 13 and 15  
October 1877.

6 Picasso, Fabio,  
"Infrequent Types  
of South American  
Humanoids",  
*Strange Magazine*,  
No. 8, Fall 1991, p.23  
and p.44.

7 Zerpa, Fabio and  
Plataneo, "La Caida  
de un OVNI en  
Pleno Siglo XIX",  
*Cuarta Dimension*  
*Extra*, September  
1981, pp. 2-12.

8 Charroux,  
Robert, *Archivos  
de Otras Mudas*,  
Barcelona, Plaza y  
Janes, p.341.

tune of at least 30,000 dollars), and by the British Rendlesham forest incident(s), we should at least be cautious of these tales in the light of this historical material.

The Aurora crash case took place during the American 1896-1897 airship scare allegedly took place at the village of Aurora, Texas. (11)

The story was first revealed on page 5 of the 19 April 1897 edition of the **Dallas Morning News**. It was written by S.E. Haydon a part-time correspondent to the newspaper and a cotton buyer. Titled 'A Windmill Demolishes It' the full text went on to say that at;

Aurora, Wise County, Texas, April 17. -- (To The News) -- About 6 o'clock this morning the early risers of Aurora were astonished at the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing through the country.

It was travelling due north, and much nearer the earth than ever before. Evidently some of the machinery was out of order, for it was making a speed of only ten or twelve miles an hour and gradually settling toward the earth. It sailed directly over the public square, and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank and destroying the judge's flower garden.

The pilot of the ship is supposed to have been the only one on board, and while his remains are badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not an inhabitant of this world.

Mr. T.J. Weems, the United States signal service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he was a native of the planet Mars.

Papers found on his person - evidently the records of his travels - are written in some unknown hieroglyphics, and can not be deciphered.

The ship was too badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power. It was built of an unknown metal, resembling somewhat a mixture of aluminium and silver, and it must have weighed several tons.

The town is full of people to-day who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of the strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon tomorrow.

This explosive encounter was largely forgotten until 1966. Then Dr. Alfred E. Kraus, the Director of the Kilgore Research Institute of West Texas State University, made a couple of visits to the crash site. Using a metal detector he found some 1932 car license plates, some old stove lids, and a few horse-bridle rings. There was nothing to indicate that several tons of unusual metal was still lurking anywhere in the vicinity.

In the same year Donald B. Hanlon and Jacques Vallee took an interest in the case. (12, 13.) As a result of this a friend of Dr. J. Allen Hynek visited the site. (14) He found that Judge Proctor's farm had been transformed into a small service station, which was owned by Mr. Brawley Oates. Although Mr. Oates was neutral in his opinion about the incident he did send the investigator to Mr. Oscar Lowery who lived in the nearby town of Newark.

Mr. Lowery revealed that T.J. Weems the alleged 'authority on astronomy' had been Aurora's blacksmith, Jeff Weems. Even more damning was the fact that Mr. Lowery, aged 11-years-old at the time of the crash, remembered nothing of the incident. Furthermore, there had never been a windmill on the site. So even if the spaceship had existed the windmill had not! Mr. Lowery's conclusion was that the whole story had been created by Haydon.

Undaunted Hynek's investigator went to the cemetery where he thought the pilot might have been buried. This was scrupulously maintained by the Masonic Order, and none of their records mentioned any Martian grave.

The story of the Aurora crash now seemed to be destined to rot in the obscurity of UFO investigators' files. Not surprisingly, the case failed to remain buried for long. On 21 June 1972, Hayden C. Hewes, Director of the International UFO Bureau, Inc. (IUFOB), said that his organisation decided to: 1) Determine if the event did occur; 2) Locate any fragments; and 3) locate, if possible, the grave of the UFO astronaut. (15)

This research fired Bill Case, an aviation writer for **The Dallas Times Herald**, into a frenzy of activity. Beginning in March 1973, he published a series of articles that created a worldwide interest in the case.

In the very first article he quoted the previously reluctant crash site owner, Mr. Brawley Oates, as saying that he thought there was some substance to the story. Indeed, he said that in 1945 he had sealed a well that had been beneath the windmill. As he worked on this task he found several metal fragments. He said:

The pieces were about the size of your fist. But we didn't think and simply junked them. Later we capped the well and drilled a new one, then we built a brick wellhouse on the site.

Next to this was placed a chicken coop. Thus, this historic location was hidden in a very rustic disguise.

By mid-1973 Bill Case had obtained three eyewitness accounts of the crash which **Flying Saucer Review** writer Eileen Buckle regarded as 'the most convincing evidence that an unidentified flying object crashed at Aurora in 1897'. (16)

At Lewisville Nursing Home, 98-year-old Mr. G.C. Curley's memory of the event was obtained. His statement appeared in the 1 June

1973 edition of **The Dallas Times Herald**:

We got the report early in Lewisville. Two friends wanted me to ride over to Aurora to see it. But I had to work. When they got back on horseback that night they told me the airship had been seen coming from the direction of Dallas the day before and had been sighted in the area. But no one knew what it was. They said it hit something near Judge Proctor's well. The airship was destroyed and the pilot in it was badly torn up. My friends said there was a big crowd of sightseers who were picking up pieces of the exploded airship. But no one could identify the metal it was made of. We didn't have metal like that in America at that time. And they said it was difficult to describe the pilot. They saw only a torn up body. They didn't say people were frightened by the crash. They couldn't understand what it was.

Then, 91-year-old Mary Evans said in a UPI report:

That crash certainly caused a lot of excitement. Many people were frightened. They didn't know what to expect. That was years before we had any regular airplanes or other kind of airships. I was only about 15 at the time and had all but forgotten the incident until it appeared in the newspapers recently. We were living in Aurora at the time, but my mother and father wouldn't let me go with them when they went up to the crash site at Judge Proctor's well. When they returned home they told me how the airship had exploded. The pilot was torn up and killed in the crash. The men of the town who gathered his remains said he was a small man and buried him that same day in Aurora cemetery.

Charles Stephens, an 86-year-old resident of Aurora, added that his father Jim Stephens had seen the spaceship plummet from the sky.

The validity of all three statements was undermined by Hayden Hewes who said that when his organisation checked them they were found to be false. Mr. G.C. Curley was actually called A.J. McCurley, who had been a teacher in Oklahoma at the time of the incident. Charles Stephens denied that his father had seen the crash, and Mary Evans said, 'They wrote that up to suit themselves. I didn't say it this way'. (17)

In 1966 nothing more than scrap metal had been found at the crash site but during May 1973 a person from Corpus Christi called Frank Kelley found some unusual metal fragments there.

Hot on the trail of this lead Bill Case noted in the 31 May issue of **The Dallas Times Herald** that samples had been sent to the North Texas State University; the American Aircraft Co.; and the National Research Institute, Ottawa, Canada.

According to Dr. Tom Gray of the North Texas State University, three of the fragments

given to him consisted of common metals. But the fourth sample looked 'as if it had been melted and splattered on the ground'. He went on to say that:

First analysis shows it to be about 75 per cent iron, and 25 per cent zinc, with some other trace elements.

But it lacks properties common to iron, such as being magnetic. It is also shiny and malleable instead of being dull and brittle like iron.

In support of this analysis the American Aircraft Co., said that one of the seven samples given to them was unusual because it too was shiny and non-magnetic.

According to Hayden Hewes, his group was unable to find Frank Kelley, and he believed that all the fragments he found was composed of ordinary iron. It was his contention that they were merely used to get the maximum publicity for the story.

The Aerial Phenomena Research Organisation (APRO) was also highly sceptical about the claims surrounding the metal fragments. They said some of them were just bits of aluminium alloy with no special qualities. Another reason for their scepticism was the fact that the metal allegedly left in the ground for 76 years looked in too fine a shape for this to be true.

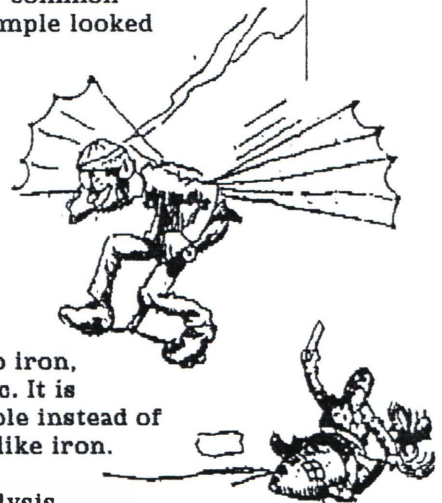
In contrast, the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) and the National Investigations Committee for Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) thought there was an element of truth in the case.

Members of MUFON using metal detectors even found a grave in the local cemetery that gave similar readings to the metal given to Dr. Tom Gray. This encouraged the elusive Frank Kelley to speculate that the body of the spaceman was clothed in a metal suit.

On the heels of this discovery came the revelation that the grave had a tombstone with a cigar-shaped vehicle drawn on it. That the drawing could easily have been caused by a scrape from a metal object did not discourage anyone.

Someone, or some group, thought the tombstone was valuable because early in the morning of 14 June 1973, it was stolen. In addition, the thieves dug-up the metal fragments that had apparently caused the earlier metal detector readings.

Meanwhile Hayden Hewes and IUFOB had been trying, through proper legal channels, to exhume the body. This legal action, the publicity, and the crowds of visitors, did not please the Aurora Cemetery Association. Their attorney, Bill Nobles, said 'We have no desire to stand in the way of scientific research'. But



9 Nickell, Joe, "The 'Hanger 18' tales - a folkloristic approach", *Common Ground*, No. 9, pp.2-10.

10 Roberts, Andy, "Saucerful of Secrets" in *UFOs 1947-1987* edited by John Spencer and Hilary Evans, Fortean Times, 1987, pp.156-159.

11 Also see: Simmons, H. Michael "Once Upon A Time In The West", *Magonia* No. 20.

12 Hanlon, Donald B. "Texas Odyssey of 1897", *Flying Saucer Review*, Sept. - Oct., 1966.

13 Hanlon, Donald B. and Vallee, Jacques, "Airships Over Texas", *Flying Saucer Review*, Jan. - Feb., 1967.

14 Hanlon, Donald B. and Vallee, Jacques, letter in "Mail Bag" column, *Flying Saucer Review*, Jan. - Feb., 1967.



**15** Hewes, Hayden  
C. "The UFO Crash  
of 1897", *Official  
UFO*, Vol. 1, No. 5,  
Jan. 1976.

**16** Buckle, Eileen,  
"Aurora Spaceman  
- R.L.P.?", *Flying  
Saucer Review*,  
July - Aug. 1973.

**17** Hewes, Hayden  
C. *ibid.*, p.30.

**18** *ibid.*

**19** *Nashville  
American* 18 April  
1897. T.B. p209:2.

**20** *Daily  
Democrat* 10 April  
1897.

when IUFOB persisted in wanting to locate and retrieve the body, he told them in a letter dated 18 March 1974:

Please be advised that as in past instances the Cemetery Association feels obligated to resist any attempt to disturb the Aurora Cemetery grounds by any third parties seeking to investigate the alleged airship crash in 1897, and to reaffirm our position that any such attempt will be resisted with whatever means are available to the Association.

Even a request by IUFOB to examine the grave with a radar detection device was turned down by the Association. (17)

None of the people involved in this story came out of it very well. If we return to the original 1897 report we might ask why S.E. Haydon concocted the story in the first place. The answer is that Aurora needed to attract tourists and business. By 1897 it had become the largest town in the county and had a population of about 3000. Unfortunately its prosperity was declining due to the effect of cotton crop failures, the bypassing of the railroad, a downtown fire and a spotted fever epidemic. By the 1970s Aurora had a population of less than 300.

It might be thought that such a fantastic story would have attracted as much interest in 1897 as it did in 1973 - it is not every day that a spaceship drops out of the sky! The reason it was ignored was due to the hundreds of phantom airship sightings appearing in the press at that time. Alongside the Aurora report the *Dallas Morning News* of 19 April 1897 diligently recorded a long series of sightings and encounters.

The newspaper files of the period contain several horrifying accounts of meteors crashing into the earth, causing damage to property, animals, and humans. Ignoring them, the April 1897 newspapers hold many airship crashes that have not received much attention from ufologists but are equally valid (or should I say invalid?).

For example, on the same day as the Aurora crash, 17 April 1897, Sam McLeary was travelling next to the Forked Deer River near Humboldt, Tennessee, when he came across an object that had crashed into some trees. Part of the craft was fixed into the ground and the rest of it was still lodged in the trees. The

newspaper report claimed that:

The larger portion consisted of a thin shell of bright white metal about 100 feet in length by 30 in diameter, running to a point at each end. A tubular rib extends along each side and from this is suspended a framework carrying the machinery, with enclosed compartment for passengers or crew. The solitary occupant, was unable to tell his story

for though the weather is not cold his body and his water barrel were solid blocks of ice. The machine had evidently reached too high altitudes, and its manager had succumbed to the pitiless cold and for want of his control had fallen to the earth.

Its engines were of strange and unknown construction, tricity. Screw propellers above and at each end and horizontal sails or wings at each side seem with the buoyant skill to combine all the principles of sea and air navigation...

This much has been ascertained from observation and meagre notes found on board, but who or whence the solitary captain has not yet been discovered. (19)

An even more intriguing sky craft exploded to the west of Lanark, Illinois, at 4.0am on 10 April. This woke the inhabitants of the town who saw a bright ruby light shoot into the sky. The light got dimmer but it encouraged about 50 men to dress and ride out into the snow storm to see what it was. It did not take them long to track it down to Johann Fliegeltoub's farm which was half-a-mile to the west of the town. Here they found the frightened farmer's family being shouted at, in a foreign language, by a person dressed in strange clothes. Nearby was the wreck of the airship and the mangled remains of two bodies. A third of the craft had driven itself into the ground. The ship;

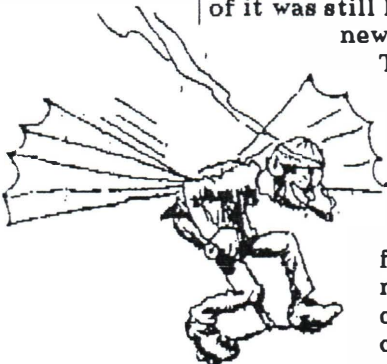
was cigar shaped and made of aluminium, about thirty feet long by nine feet in diameter, and the steady red glow came from an immense electric lamp that burned upon that part of the strange craft that projected from the ground. There were four side and one rear propellers on the machine, with a fin-like projection above it, evidently the rudder. An immense hole was torn in the under side of the ship, showing that an explosion had occurred, caused probably by a puncture from a lightning rod on the Fliegeltoub barn, as one of them was slightly bent.

The strange creature who in some marvellous manner escaped from the wreck, is now unconscious. He or she is garbed after the fashion of the Greeks in the time of Christ, as shown by stage costumes, and the language spoken was entirely unknown to any one here, though most people are familiar with high and low Dutch, and even one or two know something of French and Spanish.

The remains of the two persons who were killed were taken to the Fliegeltoub barn and straightened out on boards.

It is firmly believed here that the airship was that of an exploring party from either Mars or the moon... (20)

In the next report, filed by General F.A.Kerr, we are informed that by the afternoon Herr Fliegeltoub was charging a dollar a head for anyone who wished to see the



wreckage in his barnyard. General Kerr only had to flash his press card to gain admittance, but within a few moments the import of the spectacle bore down on his mind. To steady himself he injected himself with a grain and a half of morphine, and swallowed three cocaine tablets. These soothed his jaded nerves and he was able to note that the previous report described the craft accurately. Inside it:

was divided into four apartments, one large or general room containing the machinery of the ship, the principal part of which was a powerful electric dynamo, and there was also a tank of air compressed into a liquid. There were windows of heavy glass on each side of the room. Two of the other apartments were fitted up as sleeping rooms and the third was a bath room. There were many bottles of little pills in a cabinet in the large room, evidently condensed food. (21)

Walking from the ship to the Fliegeltoub house the reporter had to take a few more drugs. Here he:

found the unknown wanderer lying on a lounge, and I approached and examined him closely. He was about medium height and of athletic build, with long curled hair, dark brown in colour, and an extremely handsome face. He wore a white tunic reaching to his knees, and on his feet were sandals strapped with tin foil-wrapped braid. The tunic was embroidered with a coat of arms over the breast, a shield with a bar sinister of link sausages and bearing a ham sandwich rampant.

A few minutes after I entered the room he awoke and sat up. Immediately everyone fled from the room except myself. After looking around for a minute he said in a language that I at once knew to be Volapuk, "Where am I?" I answered, "Near Lanark on the earth" and he said he was glad to be there and asked how it happened.

I explained the circumstances to him and we had a long conversation, a report of which I reserve for another dispatch, but in brief he told me that he and his companions were an exploring party from Mars, who had been flying about over this country for some weeks.

About midnight he expressed a desire to see his wrecked machine and I went with him to visit it. When he saw the hole, with his fingers he bent the torn metal into its proper position, and stepping inside brought a pot of pasty looking stuff, which he spread over where the rent had been. He then ran hastily to the barn, picked up the bodies of his companions and carried them to his ship. Stepping inside he pulled a lever which set the propellers whirring, and the machine dragged itself from the ground. The operator then reversed the machinery, and shouting a farewell to me slammed the door and the airship rose rapidly into the air and finally disappeared into the night, though the red light was for a long time visible.

The crowd was awestruck by the proceedings. I myself, to whom nothing is strange, returned to Lanark and securing a room at the hotel, sat up all night smoking opium and eating hasheesh to get in condition to write this dispatch. (21)

We should warn our readers not to try this at home! Obviously the story was meant as a joke at the expense of the airship spotters, but it does have the detail and tone of "classic" contactee stories of the 1950s. The reporter, like the contactees, is the only person brave enough or privileged enough to talk to the alien; the being has superhuman strength; advanced techniques to repair the craft; the craft is a spaceship for the purpose of exploring planet earth; the alien takes away all the physical evidence

Lanark was the venue for another crash story only a few days later. At 3.35am on the morning of 12 April, the local telegraph operator heard a sound like a cyclone and looking out the window he saw a huge object slowly landing. The wings of the ship gently flapped and it would have settled without incident if the rudder had not demolished the wing of a frame house. After observing this the operator rang the alarm bells. Then:

Soon after its landing a man not more than two feet in height came out of the ship. He wore an immense beard of a pinkish hue and his head was ornamented with some ivory like substance. He was heavily clothed in robes resembling the hide of a hippopotamus. His feet were uncovered near the ankles, but lashed firmly on the soles were two immense pieces of iron ore. About his neck was a string on which were 234 diamonds.

When asked where he came from he made no reply, being apparently deaf. He said nothing and made motions, indicating he wanted something to eat or drink. He drank two buckets full of water and ate three sides of bacon, after declining to take ham, which had been tendered for him.

A short time after three other persons, similar in stature and similarly attired, came out of the air ship by means of long peculiar ropes, which reached to the ground. They could not speak or hear. One carried a staff of gold. (22)

Special trains were packed with expectant

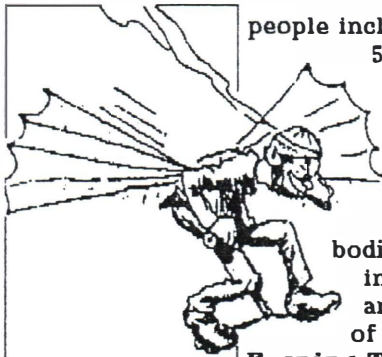


*I myself, to whom nothing is strange, returned to Lanark and securing a room at the hotel, sat up all night smoking opium and eating hasheesh to get in condition to write this dispatch*

21 Daily Democrat  
12 April 1897.

22 Daily Times  
(Dubuque, I.A.) 13  
April 1897.





people including at least two ex-governors and 56 newspaper reporters.

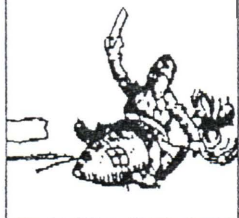
Unfortunately, a short note from W.G. Field of the **Lanark Gazette** timed at 3.10pm on 12 April, succinctly stated that, 'The air ship story is a fake.' (22)

In the state of Iowa two crashes into bodies of water occurred. The first incident was reported by John Butler and recorded in the 13 April editions of the **Iowa State Register** and the **Evening Times-Republican**. Although both carry the same account the dateline is different, so the incident either occurred at 11 p.m. on Friday 9 April or Saturday 10 April. It was on one of these nights that the citizens of Rhodes saw a bright light coming from the southwest. Crowds came out to see the heavenly vision and:

It soon came so near that the sound of machinery could be heard, which soon became as loud as a heavy train of cars. All at once the aerial monster took a sudden plunge downward and was immersed in the reservoir of the C.M. & St. Paul railway, which is almost a lake, covering about eight acres of land. No pen can describe what followed. The boiling lava from Vesuvius pouring into the sea could only equal it. The light was so large and had created so much heat that the horrible hissing which occurred when the monster plunged into the lake, could be heard for miles, and the water of the reservoir was so hot that the naked hand could not be held in it. As soon as the wreck is raised out of the water a full description of the machine will be sent.

Not long after dusk on 13 April, another strange meteor was seen by people in Iowa Falls. As it streaked across the sky it made a whirring noise. Apparently:

The light and the dark form which seemed to follow it approached the earth at a terrible speed and parties living near the river declare that it struck the water and immediately sunk out of sight. Those who reached the point of the object's disappearance first claim that the water was churned into a whirlpool and that for a long distance the water was seething and boiling. The theory advanced by many is that the airship while passing over this section became unmanageable and in the efforts of the people aboard to land shot downwards and plunged headlong into the river and after striking the bottom the propelling power of the ship dashed the waters into foam. Nothing can be seen from the surface and nothing has come to the surface that might indicate the nature of the ship or its occupants, and the supposition is that the occupants were killed or drowned and with them the secret of the ship. Searching parties are now being organised to search the river and if possible raise the wreck. Thousands are expected here every hour by



special trains from all parts of the compass and the whole matter has caused a big sensation. The field is a green one for enterprising correspondents and the advance phalanx is expected in the morning.

Any adventurous UFO investigators might profit from dredging the Iowa river or the C.M. & St. Paul railway reservoir. Though perhaps this is not as attractive a proposition as lurking in the Aurora cemetery!

The **Austin Daily Statesman** of 20 April, no doubt tongue-in-cheek reported the statements of a 'mystery man'. He proclaimed: It is my opinion that the airship, so-called, is nothing more nor less than a reconnoitring aerial war car from warlike Mars, investigating the conditions of the United States to see what reinforcements we'll need when the country is invaded by the allied armies of Europe, the Mars soldiers having no confidence whatever in the American jingoes as real fighters.

Asked, 'With these soldiers of Mars cavorting around over our heads, do you think there is any danger to us of the earth?' He replied:

I most emphatically do. Last Thursday night (15 April) one of their aerial boats exploded and scraps of steel and pieces of electric wire were found on a school house, the roof of which workmen were repairing. They heard an explosion during the night, and just before it took place the aerial vehicle was seen sailing through the air. There is great danger in venturing out these nights. What if one of these fellows from Mars should tumble out and fall on you?

Probably the best crash landing story was published in the 2 May 1897 issue of the **Houston Post**. In El Campo, Texas, an old Danish sailor called Mr. Oleson claimed that his traumatic encounter occurred in September 1862.

He told John Leander that he had been a mate on the Danish brig **Christine** which was sailing in the Indian ocean when a storm wrecked it. He and five other members of the crew were washed onto a small rocky island. One of the men died of his injuries and they huddled together at the foot of a cliff as the storm continued to rage.

It was then that; another terror was added to the horrors of the scene, for high in the air they saw what seemed to be an immense ship driven, uncontrolled in the elements. It was driving straight toward the frightened mariners, who cried aloud in their despair. Fortunately, however, a whirl of wind changed the course of the monster and it crashed against the cliff a few hundred yards from the miserable sailors.

When they got to the wreckage they found



that the craft was as big as a battleship and had been carried aloft by four huge wings. Furniture, and metal boxes with strange characters inscribed on them which contained food, were amongst some of the things they found in the jumbled mass.

Then they came across the dead bodies of the ship's crew. Altogether twelve of them dressed in strange garments were found. Their bodies were bronze coloured and were twelve feet tall. They were all male bodies, and they had soft and silky hair and beards.

The stranded sailors were so shocked by their discovery that one of them was driven insane and threw himself off the cliff. The rest of them deserted the wreck for two days but hunger drove them back to it. After feasting on the ship's strange food, they unceremoniously threw the dead bodies of the giant aliens into the sea. Emboldened by this activity they then built themselves a raft.

Launching themselves on to a now calm sea, they tried to head for Vergulen Island. After sixty hours they came across a Russian ship heading for Australia, but their adventure had taken such a strain on them that only Mr. Oleson survived to reach land and safety.

The newspaper report concluded by noting that:

Fortunately as a partial confirmation of the truth of his story, Mr. Oleson took from one of the bodies a finger ring of immense size. It is made of a compound of metals unknown to any jeweller who has seen it, and is set with two reddish stones, the name of which are unknown to anyone who has ever examined it. The ring was taken from a thumb of the owner and measures 2 inches in diameter.

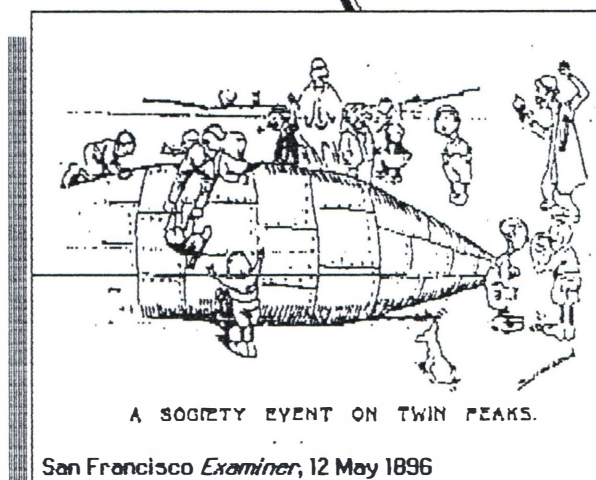
Now Mr. Editor, many people believe those airship stories to be fakes. They may be so, but the story now told for the first time is strictly true. While Mr. Oleson is an old man, he still possesses every faculty and has the highest respect for truth and veracity. Quite a number of our best citizens, among them Mr. Henry Hahn, Mr. H.C. Carleton, Green Hill and S. Porter, saw the ring and heard the old man's story.

Having looked at cases which seem to involve an extraterrestrial dimension it is worth chronicling crash incidents that suggested that the experiments of a secret inventor had gone badly wrong. Our first example, published on 1st April 1897 in the **Daily News-Tribune** (Muscatine, Iowa), tells of a bright light seen at 2.30am by a night watchman and traveller. They were at the High Bridge when they saw a bright light, that changed white, red, purple, blue, white, in the southwest. It seemed like a ball of fire with a large, dark, conical object behind it. The thing dipped into the top of trees on the Illinois side of the river but managed to pass the bridge before it crashed with a thunderous roar.

After a moment's suspense a faint cry for

help was heard, and then another still fainter, and when the watchers had recovered their frightened senses they both got into the wagon and drove hurriedly across the bridge, where they leapt out and ran to the place where the light was seen. There, in among the trees, was what looked to them like a painted boat with sails badly wrecked, while a man lay beneath groaning in great pain. He was carried to the cabin boat near by, inhabited by Henry Atwald, from Fairport, and made as comfortable as possible, he suffering such agony as to have it deemed unadvisable to remove him to town

Jefferson de Gere, 'builder of the fake airship'; *San Francisco Chronicle* 5 December 1896

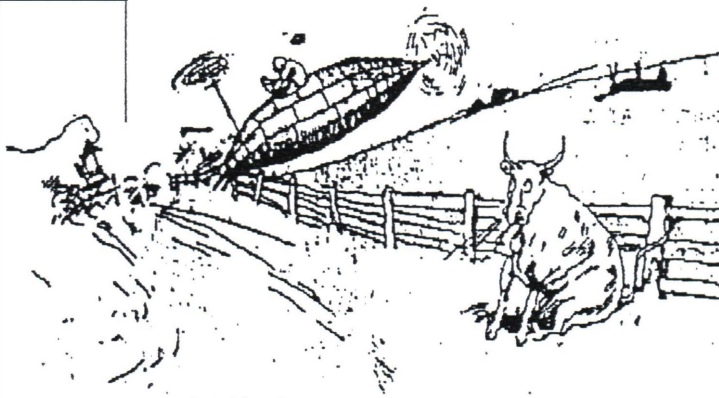


Our informant quickly hurried back for a physician, he only being able to ascertain that the man was Prof. De Barre, of Tuscon, Arizona, and that the strange craft was his own invention, he being on his way to Chicago and that his accident was due to the steering apparatus becoming unmanageable in the high wind.

1 April 1897, not surprisingly, was a good day for airship sightings. One was seen to crash into a large sycamore tree, on that day, in the upper Cottonwood valley. One of the occupants was killed but the other one recovered long enough to talk about his adventures on board the airship, and that he had come from Topeka. The **Chanute Tribune** of 03 April 1897 indicated this was a hoax by a local gentleman, Colonel Whitley.

This type of story was not exactly new, a very similar account is contained in the **San Francisco Examiner** for 5 December 1896. This edition declared:

The hull of an airship is in a ditch on the ocean side of Twin Peaks, and for a time at least church steeples, clock towers and



## THE AIR SAILOR MAN

factory chimneys are safe from all but the soaring imaginations of the men who believe that "the prostrate leviathan of the air crashed down from dizzy heights and met all but complete annihilation in the bed of a foaming mountain torrent."

The man who built this craft, a Mr. J.H. de Gear, said he had worked according to the plans of an inventor who wanted to stay anonymous. Mr. de Gear had been trying to fly the craft when a strong wind made him crash. The ship, merely an iron cylinder divested of any machinery, was conveniently close to a saloon which enjoyed a boom due to this story.

Much publicity was given to this crash case but the **San Francisco Chronicle** of 5 December 1896 revealed that it was a fake constructed by press agent Frank de Gear. The nearby Sunnyside Inn had paid him for his efforts at drumming up business. His brother, Jefferson de Gear, said he helped with the fake and that:

"I was simply employed as an expert cornice-maker to build the machine and put it where it was found. Yes, it was built for exhibition purposes. It took over three bundles of galvanised iron to construct it, and the thing weighed over 400 pounds. I built it in two nights and one day, and had eleven men working on it Wednesday night. I think I deserve credit for the job: it was a good piece of work."

Another story, in the **Daily Herald** (St. Joseph, Missouri), of 06 April 1897 said that:

Bethany, Mo., April 5. - (Special to the Herald.) Last night about 10.30 o'clock an airship was seen coming from the southwest at the rate of about 25 miles an hour, and looked to be about one-half mile high. It stopped for a few seconds over the court house, and then moved on toward the northeast, and went out of sight. This morning two men, John Leib and Ira Davis, living six miles east, brought word to town that an airship had fallen on J.D. Sims' farm and a man was found dead. The coroner has gone to hold an inquest.

More details are given in the **Daily Herald's** 9 April 1897 edition. This says that two men who were operating the craft were killed and mutilated beyond recognition. The craft that 'resembles a cigar in shape, and has three propellers on either side' had come to grief against Sims' flag post. Letters found in the pockets of the victims indicated they had come from San Francisco or Omaha. The ship was taken to a warehouse in Bethany for exhibition to the curious crowds. Just when we are about to believe this story the author of the report had to spoil things by signing himself "A TRUE FAKIR".

This story possibly inspired a report from Highland Station that featured an airship that exploded there on the night of 15 April 1897. The **Globe** (Atchison, Kansas) of 17 April, went on to say that the injured pilot was found and he claimed he was Pedro Sanchez of Cuba. He conveniently took the airship wreckage away the next day.

Near Philo, Champaign county, Illinois, there came a more graphic account of death by airship. A cone shaped craft was seen fighting against a heavy west wind at 10pm on 15 April 1897. The **Daily Gazette** (Champaign, Illinois), of 16 April 1897, continues the tale:

When just south of Bouse's grove the craft became unmanageable and came down with a crash on Jeff Shafer's farm, about 100 feet from where George Shafer was disking. The team took fright and ran away, throwing Young Shafer in front of the harrow which passed over him, cutting him all to pieces. In the wreck of the ship, which covered a space nearly 100 feet square, were found the mutilated remains of three persons. They were partially imbedded in the soft ground and covered with blood, so that it was impossible to identify them, but from what McLoed (Norman McLoed was a witness to this event - N.W.) could see he judge to be Japanese.

The report filed by "W.J. Wilkinson" concludes by saying that many are going to the site of the crash, and that more will be known once an inquest has been conducted. The game is given away, however, by this postscript:

The **Gazette** has been unable to find out who this man "Wilkinson" is, and from all accounts, there is no such man living in Philo. The names of the people he uses in the account are genuine, and those of prominent people, but it is evident that they were not consulted before the account was sent away.

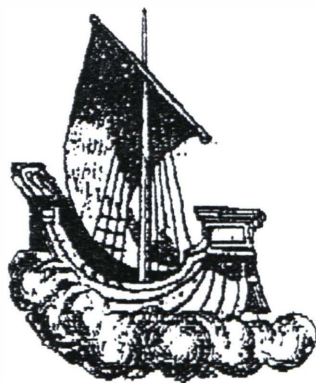
I was intrigued by another crash story that sounded very promising. This related how a reporter had got to the summit of New York mountain, where he saw a fifty-foot-long cigar-shaped vessel 'plunged deep into the mountain top.' With the aid of ropes the reporter and fellow rescuers got to the broken ship where



The Magonia Conference, provisionally planned for late August this year has been postponed. There are a number of other conferences being held at about the same time, and we are unwilling to burden the UFO world with yet another. Instead we plan to hold a Magonia/MUFOB 25th Anniversary meeting and birthday party in May 1993, over the May Bank Holiday (Saturday 1st, Monday 3rd May)

The first issue of MUFOB (originally Merseyside UFO Bulletin) as an independent magazine was published in January 1968. At that time MUFOB was very much a minority voice trying to edge ufology away from the overwhelming shadow of the ETH and towards a broader understand which has explored psychological, sociological, and indeed at times parapsychological perspective on the problem.

We intend over the next year to publish articles looking at how ufology and the UFO phenomenon itself has changed over the past quarter of a century. We are also planning to present you from time to time with little extracts and snippets from our prehistoric layers of old MUFOBs and Magonias showing just how much things have or have not changed.



**1968 - 1993**

they found a badly injured old man. This was exciting news but the account in the *Avalanche* (Glenwood Springs, Colorado) of 4 May 1897 blows its cover by saying the man came from the North and is called "Santa Claus", and the reporter wakes from his dream.

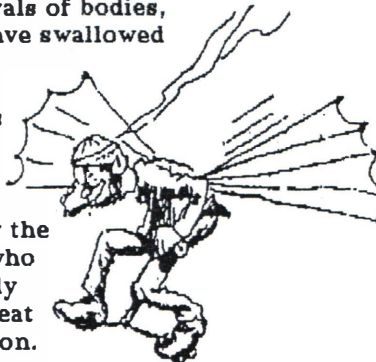
There are many other crash stories which have variable reliability. The *Jefferson Bee* of 15 April 1897 said that an airship had crashed near the town on 10 April. A terrible sound was heard and the next day a craft was found. This contained 4 bodies that were mashed to a pulp, despite this it was ascertained that they had two faces, and two sets of arms and legs, and they were taller than earth people. This was acknowledged to be a hoax by the newspaper staff.

A better case which received a good deal of publicity came from Pavillion township. This said that two old soldiers saw an airship in the sky followed by an explosion. The next day, 12 April, wreckage was found in the area and at Comstock township. (23)

On the 17 April 1897 a flying drugstore was seen at Park Rapids. As it went over Fish Hook Lake it exploded and legs and arms were seen to fly everywhere, causing the fish to crawl out of the lake for some peace and quiet! (24)

An abandoned cigar-shaped airship, with a broken propeller was found by Mr. Thurber, near Mead at the mouth of Dead Man creek. (25) Someone calling himself "xxx" said an airship hit his friend's windmill near Elmo. (26) There are many accounts of things falling from airships, and some of them are nearly as silly as the story in the *Livermore Gazette* of 16 April 1897. This claimed that the good citizens of the town made an airship crash so that they could use parts from it to decorate the place.

These accounts show that ufological holy grails such as Roswell are far from being a new phenomenon. In the context of the airship wave as a whole crash cases were generally treated as a joke, but we can see that ufologists were ready to absorb such cases as the Aurora crash into the body of ufological lore because of their similarity to modern-day cases. In the airship wave people did not expect their accounts of crashes to be believed, their motive was to ridicule and shock into rationality the believers of the airship myth. In terms of the flying saucer myth it has taken time for serious ufologists to wholeheartedly believe in crash cases and retrievals of bodies, but those who have swallowed this pill must be prepared to accept that it has probably been poisoned by their own gullibility and by the work of "liars" who are unconsciously carrying-on a great American tradition.



**23** *Evening News* (Detroit) 13 April 1897.

**24** *Hubbard Co. Clipper* 22 April 1897.

**25** *The Chronicle of Spokane* 16 April 1897.

**26** *Albany Ledger* (Mo.), 21 May 1897.

#### **SOURCES:**

Most of this material is available in Eddie Bullard's "The Airship File" and Supplements I and II of the file. Other excellent sources are Robert G. Neeley's "UFOs of 1896/1897: The Airship wave" and "The Airship Chronicle" (both published by *The Fund for UFO Research*).

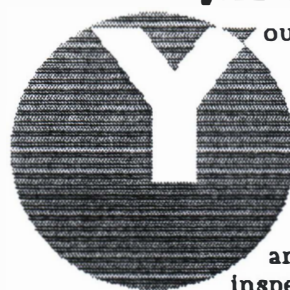


Reading their local papers, John Harney and John Rimmer uncover a curious trail of rumour.

# catflap



John Harney writes:



You've probably heard stories about dogs, rats and cats disappearing through the back doors of Chinese or Indian restaurants, and being slaughtered, stewed, and served with curry and rice. Police and RSPCA inspectors have wasted a

great deal of time investigating such allegations and, so far as I am aware, not a shred of worthwhile evidence has ever been found to support them.

But have you heard that there is a foreign country where cat fur is the height of fashion? I don't mean big cats, such as leopards, but ordinary household moggies. This country is \_\_\_\_\_. [Fill in the name of your least-favourite country.]

You don't believe it? Well, that's what it says in my local paper (*Bracknell News*, 21 May 1992). It's the lead story, under the banner headline: "Fur Traders Target Cats".

Some weeks previously, a resident of Bracknell, Berkshire had called the police after seeing two men trying to entice a cat into a black plastic bag. Since then "the number of cats going missing locally has soared". It is rather irritating, though, that we are not given any indication of the number of cats involved. The matter is being pursued by an organisation calling itself Bracknell Petsearch, which has uncovered some startling 'facts'.

The 'massive increase in the number of cats going missing' is "easily explained as a blip on the statistics until" -- I really like this detail -- "it is noticed that each month the colour of the cats going missing changes. Last month tabbies and tortoiseshell animals were being reported lost. So far this month black cats are in the majority."

Yes, but how do we know they are being captured by fur traders? The main evidence is a black plastic bag full of skinned cats found at the local junction with the M4 motorway. This revelation came from Bracknell Petsearch co-ordinator Lynda Martin who said the discovery had been made by 'a local RSPCA volunteer'.

"That information came from a very good source," she said: "Nothing was officially reported because it is difficult to do anything with a bag of dead animals." Mrs Martin believes the traders have targeted Bracknell recently, stealing the cats, skinning them inside a van, and then fleeing with the pelts to their base in London along the M4. "Those pelts would then be smuggled out of the country to dealers abroad."

There are other curious details in this story. The reporter alleges that "Scotland Yard reckons a trade in cat skins is raging in London, with the pelts being flown out to unscrupulous fur traders abroad." If this were true, the tabloids would be full of it, but they don't seem to have noticed. Local police and RSPCA





officials have received no evidence of skinned cats and made the usual non-committal statements when approached by the paper.

It will be interesting to see if this story spreads to other areas. Keep an eye on your local paper -- and don't believe everything you read in it.

#### **Your Editor continues...**

But surely we can believe everything we read in the *Barnes Mortlake and Sheen Times*, after all it is owned by one of our most respected media dynasties, the Dimblebys, no less. Well judge for yourself. The 19 June 1992 edition carried the front page headline "Cat Snatch Fear After 'Spate' of Missing Pets" accompanied by a photograph of local pet-owner Victor Schwanberg holding an appealing looking cat who is not otherwise identified.

The story conforms to the Bracknell pattern, complete with a mysterious "woman who was seen stroking a cat and then snatching it and putting it in a bag", according to vet Donald Cameron, "someone has also reported seeing five dead cats laid out on the pavement". The vet declares: "Cat fur fetches a high price abroad," - in those mysterious countries which have no cats of their own? - "it is used to make gloves and small toys". High-priced small toys presumably.

The only real fact of the story seems, as in the Bracknell case, to be some alarm about the number of cats going missing in the area. Now I can confirm that there are often small, sad notices attached to trees in this neighbourhood appealing for the return of lost pets (including dogs), but I have always assumed that this was due to the number of very busy roads and the amount of open spaces, parks and commons in the area. Mr Schwanberg, one of whose cats went missing, lives on the Upper Richmond Road, part of London's notoriously dangerous and grossly over-used South Circular road.

The item concludes with a quote from a Mrs Joan Wearne of an organisation called Petwatch (it is not clear whether this has anything to do with Bracknell's Petsearch) who claims that the cats are skinned and their fur sold in Italy and Germany, but the police "do not want to know". As if to confirm her claim a police spokesman commented "we would not record stolen cats, but we are not aware of a problem". Obviously evidence of a cover-up!


Shortly after reading this I discovered that the latest issue of *Folklore Frontiers* discussed a report which appeared in the 24 April 1992 issue of *The Mail*, Hartlepool, where Mrs Wearne also puts in an appearance. Warning of the dangers of the catnappers she reverts to an older, racist theme. She announces that a 'Yorkshire printer' found the remains of

several cats next to a mincing machine in the basement of a building which used to be an Indian restaurant, while a 'Manchester policeman' (highly specific these descriptions) found 200 dead cats in a skip.

So what is going on here? I rang the Barnes and Mortlake paper and spoke to the reporter who had written the story. I was particularly concerned, because in the following week's paper there were letters from obviously distressed pet-owners in the area. Unfortunately she seemed unimpressed by the thought that she may have been sold a pup (sorry!) on her front page scoop. "I was only reporting what people told me" she explained. I had always thought that journalist considered 'printing things people told you' mere public relations, and journalism involved going out and finding the facts. I pointed out the startling coincidence of a virtually identical story appearing in three local papers in different parts of the country and the unlikelihood of catnappers in both Barnes and Bracknell leaving dead cats neatly lined up at the sides of the road. "Maybe that's how they operate", she said. Well maybe, but didn't she think that in view of this extra information she might consider taking the story a little further, if only to reassure anxious local cat-lovers? No, but if I wanted to write a letter to the editor, they would publish it on their correspondence page. I find it disturbing that after playing on many local peoples' fears with a front page lead story presented with all the authority of Dimbleby Newspapers, the reporter was not prepared to do any further checking when presented with new evidence that made the story look decidedly dubious, and was prepared to leave any further coverage to the vagaries of the letters column.

So what is going on? Why do cats in the North-East end up in the curry, whilst cats in the South-East are skinned and their pelts flown hundreds of miles across Europe? Could it be because these alarmists feel that traditional racist slurs about Indian restaurants are unlikely to be taken seriously in the liberal climate of Richmond and Barnes, whereas concern about the fur-trade and 'animal rights' might produce a greater sense of shock? And in how many more local papers have variants of this story appeared?

Over to you: send the cuttings, and details of any other bizarre stories in similar vein. We're particularly keen to hear more news of Mrs Wearne. In fact we are inaugurating a new, national organisation called 'Nutwatch' (all *Magonia* readers are automatically members) to monitor these and similar reports. Start sending those cuttings!



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# BOOK REVIEWS

VALLEE, Jacques. *Revelations: alien contact and human deception*. Souvenir Press, 1992. £14.99

On this leg of his whistle-stop return to the UFO field, Vallee stops at the station marked Paranoia Gulch, USA: that quaint township inhabited by the likes of Bill Cooper, John Lear and others who shall be nameless [A wise move - M'Learned Friend]. The problem with Paranoia Gulch is that even if one stops off as a tourist gawping at the strange ways of its inhabitants, a little of their malaise seems to rub off. Vallee is quite clear headed in seeing through the dementia of Cooper, Lear and cronies, who clearly regard all tourists as spies and saboteurs. When Vallee tries to disabuse Cooper of the idea that he was performing autopsies on those zapped by aliens in Brazil, Vallee is denounced as part of the universal cover up.

But maybe some of it rubs off, and Vallee's undoubted talents as a writer of science fiction thrillers perhaps makes him see over-elaborate theories himself. It may be comforting, flattering even, to imagine that the hoaxers who fooled you needed the huge resources of a government or international agency to pull the wool over your perceptive eyes. Rather humiliating to admit that you may have been taken in by a bunch of imaginative teenagers. Do we really need to believe that the Cergy-Pontoise 'abduction' was organised by the French intelligence service to test the reactions of the local gendarmes

to unusual events. More likely a scam that went wrong from a couple of local Jacques the Lads. Remember that the great Warminster Hoax was not perpetrated by the massed ranks of MI5, but by half-a-dozen lab technicians in between visits to the pub.

Also included are other freelance hoaxers like UMMO and APEN. It was only when I dug out some APEN material to give to Vallee at his recent Manchester talk that I suddenly worked out who was behind APEN. The hoaxer had thrown me and others off the scent



with exciting hints of a vast fascist conspiracy - much more interesting to politically aware 1970's Magonians than crashed saucers. There were plenty of giveaway clues: a penchant for Shakespearian quotations for article titles, a interest in studying (and infiltrating) neo-nazi groups, a ready supply of student colleagues able to post APEN letters from all points of the compass when returning home during the vacations. I hereby reveal (what Jenny Randles and others probably worked out years ago) that the originator of APEN was Bryan Jeffrey, late of Cambridge University.

UMMO had, one suspects, a more serious purpose. It was samizdat literature saying things which could not be said openly in Francoist Spain, where writing openly in praise of figures such as Bertrand Russell or Che Guevara could be hazardous to your health. UMMO contrasted a rationalist Utopia with Franco's anachronistic dictatorship.

In some cases hoaxers' motivations may be unclear even to themselves. Is it too unreasonable to speculate that under the disguise of 'having a bit of a lark', some of the crop circle makers can express quite serious artistic leanings, which, if expressed in say painting, would not be acceptable in their community or subculture: "Fred paints, must be a poofter, 'eave a brick at 'im!"

Other stories can only be appreciated in context. Bentwaters/Woodbridge can only be properly appreciated if we realise that it took place at the height of the Cruise missile controversy. If, for one reason or another, servicemen were telling exciting 'tales out of school' about the base, better that they be silly stories about crashed flying saucers than details of the location of missiles. If flying saucer stories were circulating about the base, it might not have been prudent to put a stop to them until the leaker had been identified and neutralised. Indeed, it may have been helpful to reinforce them, even supplying different versions to individual suspects.

This paranoia not only infects the reporter but the reader as well. There are those clues which Vallee has missed: the mysterious characters involved at the beginning of the Hill story, for instance. One could easily invent a plot whereby the whole scenario was suggested to



them in order to discredit them. After all, they were just the sort of couple likely to earn the undying hatred of J Edgar Hoover. There is the shadowy figure of Bertil Kuhlmann; the strange political affiliations of some of the Lear Jet Set.

I could go the distance and create a nice rumour about the real conspiracy, the shadowy Project Far Stranger, based on after-dinner musings by Churchill to Truman about how the external danger of Germany had saved Britain from insurrection in 1914. Wouldn't it be nice if some external threat could unite the dangerously divided wartime victors - dust down those old Defense Department studies of the great Martain Fear, and recommission Hedley Cantril, Joseph Campbell and others into the plot to promote the theme of the Martian bombers. At some point in 1949 however, the project begins to be

infiltrated by radical rightists and allies of Colonel Lindberg, as part of their half-baked plans to make general MacArthur proconsul of America. Not surprisingly it is hit on the head by Eisenhower when he takes over in 1953. But it is easier to start a myth than to stop it, and in any case the underlings, once let loose, spin their own strands. Of course, things change when the actor who was to have read the news of the invasion on coast to coast broadcasts becomes President...

One thing that annoys the more sensible neighbours of Paranoia Gulch USA is the visitors from afar who come gawp at their embarrassing relatives, yet forget that they have relatives of their own back in Paranoia Gulch Europe who they wouldn't want to have turned into tourist attractions. There is for example that nice Mr Creighton who, if I am not very much mistaken, believes that UFOs or their pilots

are card-carrying communist djinns who go around stealing library-books on flying saucers.

I'm being facetious and I must stop it. It strikes me that despite his often well-placed barbs against much of American ufology, Vallee is probably closer to it in most respects than to the really radical 'psychosocial' (for want of a better word) ufologist both in Europe and in the States. His only real disagreement with the ETHers is on the place of origin of the 'real phenomenon', and all his criticisms of the old time ETH apply with equal if not more force to theories involving alternative universes, fractal beings from the th dimension, time travellers, or any other hypothesis involving a somebody else from somewhere else. (Project Far Stranger @ Peter Rogerson, 1992)

*Peter Rogerson*

HOUGH, Peter and RANGLES, Jenny. *Looking for the Aliens; a psychological, imaginative and scientific investigation*. Blandford, 1992. £8.95.

Since Galileo and Newton disenchanted the universe, the sensitive have felt a terror of the infinite solitude of the lifeless spheres: from Pascal to a physicist on a recent TV documentary who described her terror of the night sky and its infinitely brooding silence. There has grown a sense of crushing loneliness in a universe devoid of purpose and meaning, and much of the power of the kinds of topics discussed in this magazine lies in their attempts to break this silence, to reach across vast gulfs and make contact. With psychical research it was an attempt to break the silence of the grave and contact lost ancestors. With ufology the drive has been to reach across the gulfs of space and make contact with people of another shape who can share our dreams and fears. Both subjects are defined by their respective quests, which are essentially religious.

It is a theological notion which inspires the dreams of science fiction writers and the vast popular myth of ET, as well as the scientific quest for 'intelligence outside': the doctrine of plenitude which holds basically that God

would not have made such a vast universe without peopling it all over with his most important creation, ourselves. The CETI programme remains painfully naive, with its belief that humans are the preordained summit of terrestrial evolution.

For more sophisticated ufologists the most naive versions of their grail can be seen to be hopelessly flawed. Yet they still dream of some over-arching order which will turn the universe from a bleak wilderness into a welcoming habitat. There is tension between this yearning and the reality brought home by modern scientific education and which produces a need for such ancient hopes to be reasserted in modern, 'scientific' language. The ETH allows this to be admirably expressed. The essentially religious nature of much ufology (and CETI) is summed up in the following quote from this book: "Have the major cultural changes - such as the sudden stride towards freedom, democracy, anti-nuclear treaties, the vast and expansive plans to solve ecological problems or the incredible response to campaigns to beat world hunger... been mere accidents of history or are they a result of conditioning messages that are emerging within?" In other words, can we detect God's

providence working through history. It is typical of this kind of speculation that the possibility that they were the result of the good sense of mankind is not even raised. This is an excellent example of millenaralist speculation - which held that the divine kingdom would come as a result of gradual reform through history, as against millennialism which prophesied the violent overthrow of the existing order. Millennialism appears in Randles' speculations about the 'Children of Armageddon'. Randles writing is full of this tension between the scepticism born of her scientific education, and the religious need to find order behind the apparent randomness of events. She is far from alone in this of course, witness Vallee's 'control system' and Scott Rogo's 'The Phenomenon'.

Similar concerns activate many beliefs in our subjects: the abductees represent a wide range of encounters with the numinous, and become modern prophets. Yet abductees also express the violent, dark side of the universe. The glacial indifference of the Standard American Abductor is the reflection of a bleak and uncomprehending cosmos, where the sacred can only be experienced as a malignancy and where rapture becomes rape. *Peter Rogerson.*

# HOLD THE BACK PAGE

## Miscellaneous ramblings from the ufological fringe

From a report by Dennis Stacy in the June issue of *MUFON UFO Journal* we learn that a major public opinion survey into presumptive abduction experiences has been undertaken in America by the Roper Organisation. This is a respected US polling organisation, and the survey was financed by Las Vegas businessman Robert Bigelow and another, unnamed, sponsor. The report is published with commentaries by ufologists Budd Hopkins, David Jacobs and Ron Westrum, psychiatrist John Mack and social worker John Carpenter.

The pollsters undertook a survey of 'unusual experiences', which included five questions designed by Hopkins and Jacobs to identify potential abductees. The questions, with the percentage of the 5947 respondents who answered 'yes' were:

Have you ever:

- 1 Woken up with paralysis and a sense of presence in the room (18%)
- 2 Experienced a period of an hour or more in which you were apparently lost but couldn't remember where or why (13%)
- 3 Experienced a feeling of actually flying through the air although you didn't know why or how (10%)
- 4 Seen balls of light in your room without known cause (8%)
- 5 Found puzzling scars on your body without you or anyone else remembering how or where you received them (8%)

2% responded to four or more of these questions, indicative to Hopkins and Jacobs of being an abductee. This is extrapolated to 3.5 to 4 million abductees in the USA alone. Other questions were: Have you seen a ghost (11%), a UFO (7%), had vivid dreams about UFOs (5%). 1% reacted positively to a nonsense word introduced into a question as a control.

To Magonians these results are

yet more evidence against a literal interpretation of the abduction stories. Questions 1 and 4 relate to experiences which traditionally would be considered by psychical researchers. The figure for 'bedroom invaders' is close to the old SPR apparition/hallucination figure, while the positive response to ghosts is lower than in several previous surveys. The sensation of flying is a common type of hypnogogic experience.

The figure for time loss may be an underestimate, for 'memory lapses' and blackouts, with their connotations of pathology, are the sorts of things people may be reluctant to reveal to questioners. The figure for mystery scars also seems to be low. A figure of 50% would not have surprised me, the hazards of life being as they are.

We hope to obtain copy of the complete report and produce a fuller review, correlating the figures. Over 100,000 copies of the survey have apparently been distributed to 'health professionals' in the States, apparently to coincide with a CBS TV mini-series, *Intruders*, shown in May. Will this mean that abduction will replace Satanism as a main-stream panic? *xx Unusual Personal Experiences; and analysis of the data from three national surveys conducted by the Roper Organisation.* The Bigelow Holding Corporation, 4640 South Eastern Ave., Las Vegas, Nevada 89119.

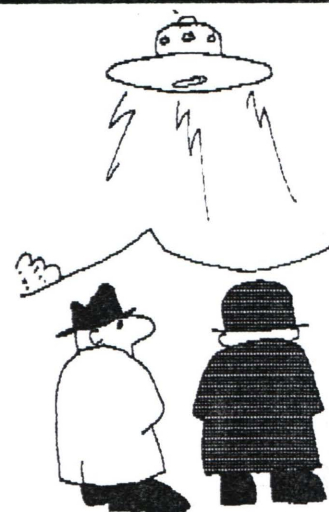
### *Our Man at the Collectors' Fair with the copy of Exchange and Mart writes:*

Recently I attended the Guildford Postcard Fair, where one of the events was a talk on '200 Years of Extraordinary Weather in the South East'. The speaker Ian Currie, a writer on meteorology, described hurricanes, floods and blizzards,

etc. as reported in local newspapers and, later, depicted on postcards. Since Ian Currie has written several books on different Southern counties describing local extreme weather conditions, I asked him after his talk if he had come across any evidence of corn-circles earlier than the nineteen-eighties. He replied that he had specifically looked for such reports in local newspaper files and postcard collections while researching his books, but he had not found anything.

In view of the highly photogenic nature of the circles and the way local postcards early this century commemorated even minor events this seems a fairly strong piece of negative evidence. Currie commented that he had pointed this out to Terence Meaden, who he described as becoming 'shirty' when he heard this. **Roger Sandell**

## THE BARMPOTS



It's not that I mind the implant,  
it's just that I wish they  
wouldn't keep playing Jason  
Donovan records all day